

FAIRBURY-CROPSEY JR-SR. HIGH SCHOOL

THE RAILROADS AND FAIRBURY

REQUIRED FOR A GRADE FOR INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

BY

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The founding and growth of Fairbury resulted from its contact with the T.P. & W. and Wabash railroads and the affect of the railroad strikes on the community.

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INTRODUCTION

Illinois, located in the central portion of our country, was, and still is noted for her rich and fertile soil. Her resources were bountiful. Something should be done to bring wealth to Illinois, to bring out the quality of the state. This is precisely what was done when trains and railroads were invented. They have helped to make Illinois the state she is today.

In the 1830s, just after ten years of declaring statehood, the people of Illinois thought they needed to improve the transportation system within the state. They had a dream to make Illinois the center of all trade. They had a great ambition and were eager to begin their project.

During this time period a bill was passed to introduce the building of railroads. They were to be built with support from the state. The state legislature voted more than \$8 million to be spent on railroad construction. This money was to provide the state with thirteen hundred miles of track. So, with the new project in mind, the people rushed in with much enthusiasm to take the first step toward progress. At first it seemed as if this would be a super project, but later, the people realized they were a bit too hasty. The project was too much to handle.

The people were becoming nervous. Money was borrowed from state banks to help pay for the railroads. After a while, the state banks refused to loan any more money. Then, money was borrowed from New York banks. After a while, they, too, refused to loan any more money. So, as a last attempt, money was borrowed from London banks. The London banks, also, refused to loan any more money. Well, the people quickly went into a state of depression. They couldn't pay back all the money they borrowed because they didn't have it. As a result of this, all work on the railroads was stopped. Illinois was in deep trouble. She owed over \$15 million! She was called "the ruined state." [1]

Illinois was in a helpless condition when in 1842, Thomas Ford became the new Governor of the state. He was a very bright man. He thought that if the people of Illinois taxed themselves, according to their needs, they would be out of debt. Eventually, under his plan, they did get out of debt and their credibility was restored. The future was beginning to brighten.

The period from 1850 to 1860 was a time of success for the railroads. Illinois contained more lines of railroads than any other place in the country. At the start of the decade, one hundred miles had been built, but by the end of the decade, over twenty-eight hundred miles had been built!

The future of the railroads looked good, but in 1861, the Civil War broke out. Railroad construction was slowed down quite a lot. Then after the war was over, in 1865, railroad construction picked up. By 1880, over three thousand miles had been built.

During the period from 1850 to 1870, Chicago was the fastest growing town because of the railroads. She was at the center of all trade. She could receive products from the mines and products from the farms. She would prepare these products for shipment to customers all over the world. Even today, Chicago serves as one of the most important railroad cities in the world.

The railroads were a big influence on groups. The farmers and miners were a part of the groups. They relied on the railroads very much to make their work successful. Farmers were able to sell more products because of the railroads. They could transport their goods to many more places and in less time. They could buy or sell farm equipment that had been transported on railroads. Other things changed because of railroads: (1) Farm produce increased in price, (2) more farm products were grown, and (3) farm property became more valuable.

Miners were able to transport coal on the railroads. They kept busy trying to keep the engines supplied with coal. The railroads made it possible for new mines to open up. In ways like these, the miners and railroads helped each other out. They also earned a lot of money.

Not only did the railroads help individual groups but also they helped the state as a whole. The railroads attracted many people to Illinois. New towns grew up in places where there was nothing before. The town of Fairbury was born this way. Towns that did exist, grew even bigger to become important cities of the state. Railroads reached almost everywhere. By 1931, only a very few places were not within twenty miles of a railroad.

Today, Illinois contains more than ten thousand miles of railroads. Most of them are used to carry freight through long distances. "The railroads are the arteries through which flows the blood of our agricultural and industrial life.[2]

THE HISTORY OF THE LOCAL RAILROADS

The T., P. & W.

The Beginning of the T. P. & W.

As mentioned in the introduction, Fairbury was born with the coming of the railroads. The railroad that founded Fairbury was the Peoria and Oquawka Railroad, later to be known as the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad. The idea of building the T., P. & W. was thought of a long time ago. It was planned during the decade of internal improvements.

The T., P. & W. was to start in Peoria. So, it was in this city that the ground was leveled to prepare for the railroad. Work was begun, but then many people started to complain. They weren't really sure if they wanted a railroad to run through their community. So, with all the opposition within the town, the work was stopped. It can be said that in the years of its birth, 1836-37, the T., P. & W. also died.

Several years later, the idea of building a railroad came into question again. This time, however, the people were ready to support a railroad. This is how the T., P. & W. got started. First, on February 12, 1849, the Peoria and Oquawka Company obtained a charter from the Illinois General Assembly to build a railroad. The railroad was to reach from Peoria, Illinois to Oquawka, Illinois. Oquawka is near the Mississippi River. It was thought that the railroad would connect this river to the Illinois River in Peoria, but the railroad never did reach Oquawka.

Second, on February 10, 1851, the charter was amended to build a branch of the railroad to Burlington, Iowa. This little addition made the railroad a total of ninety-three miles.

Third, on June 22, 1852, the charter was amended to include some more territory. This time the railroad was to reach in the opposite direction. It was to be built to the Illinois-Indiana state line, reaching its terminal point at Effner, Indiana.

During the next several years, more branches of railroad track were added. Under the Peoria and Oquawka Company, a branch was built to reach Oquawka. This branch was five miles long. Under the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company, a branch was built to reach from La Harpe, Illinois, to Burlington, Iowa. Each new branch that was built was providing that community with better transportation facilities.

THE CHANGES OF OWNERSHIP OF THE T.P. & W.

The railroad was divided into two halves; the western half, which went from Peoria to the Mississippi River and the eastern half, which went from Peoria to Effner, Indiana. The western half was started in 1849 and finished in January of 1857. The eastern half was started in 1853 and finished in December of 1859. These two halves were similar in that both went into debt occasionally and had to be sold to some other company.

The western half of the railroad had financial difficulties and was sold to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company. The eastern half of the railroad, also, had financial difficulties and was sold to the Toledo, Peoria, and Warsaw Railroad Company in 1867. This company began to build onto the western half of the railroad. They built a road from Peoria to Warsaw, Illinois and from Peoria to Keokuk, Iowa. Both of these roads were finished in October of 1868.

The railroad went through many other transfers of ownership. First, on February 21, 1861, the Peoria and Oquawka Railroad Company was changed to the Logansport, Peoria, and Burlington Railroad Company. Second, on May 14, 1864, the Logansport, Peoria and Burlington Railroad Company transferred the property over to the Toledo, Peoria and Warsaw Railway Company. Third, on January 20, 1880, the Toledo, Peoria and Warsaw Railway Company was sold. Four months later on May 20, it was changed to the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad Company. Fourth, on July 1, 1887, the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad Company was changed to the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railway Company. Fifth, on April 1, 1927, the Toledo, Peoria and Western

Railway Company was changed to the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad. Sixth, in the 1960's, the road was taken over by the Santa Fe, but is still known as the T., P. & W.

THE RELATION OF THE T. P. & W. TO FAIRBURY

The T., P. & W. railroad joins many important railroads from the east and west. It reaches across the widest part of the state. It has a total of two hundred and thirty-nine miles, which run from Effner, Indiana to Hamilton, Warsaw, and Keokuk, all near the Mississippi River. Eighteen miles of the T., P. & W. run through Livingston County. The tracks of this railroad run through the town of Fairbury, right along the community's business district.

THE WABASH

The Reaction Toward the Wabash

Fairbury "entered railroad history in 1872 with the building of the Chicago and Paducah Railroad." The Chicago and Paducah was welcomed into the community of Fairbury as opposed to the T., P. & W., which was practically thrown out of town. This railroad was given \$50,000 in stock from the Indian Grove Township. By this time, the people of Fairbury were beginning to realize the importance of the railroads in their lives.

The Beginning of the Wabash

The Chicago and Paducah, later to be called the Wabash Railroad, also played an important role in the lives of the people in Fairbury. The idea of a railroad through Livingston County was thought of in 1865. Samuel L. Fleming, of Pontiac, obtained a charter from the state legislature to receive permission to build a railroad. This railroad was to reach from Ottawa to Fairbury, including Pontiac. In 1867, the charter was amended to include any area to the north or any area to the south of Pontiac, as long as Pontiac was included. Work was started on the Chicago and Paducah Railroad in 1871. It was completed in Fairbury in 1872.

The Changes of Ownership of the Wabash

This railroad, like the T., P. & W., went through a few changes of ownership. To begin with, the railroad started out as the Fairbury, Pontiac & Northwestern Company. This company made a contract with Col. Ralph Plumb, of Streator, Col. W.H.W. Cushman, of Ottawa and David Strawn. The Company was to turn over all the stocks and bonds from the railroad so when these people were through building the railroad, it would become theirs. Then, in 1881, the Chicago and Paducah Railroad was changed to the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railroad. In May of 1889, the road was transferred to become the Wabash Railroad. In October, 1964, it became part of the Norfolk and Western Railroad. In 1974, service on the line from Forrest to Streator, through Fairbury, was discontinued.

The Relation of the Wabash to Fairbury

The Chicago and Paducah Railroad, a branch of the Wabash, reaches in a southeasterly direction from Streator. It continues through Cornell, Pontiac, Fairbury, and Forrest. This is a total of twenty-nine miles. The branch used to extend diagonally to Strawn but this section has since been torn up. There is proof of this fact, because the old grades of the Chicago and Paducah can still be seen to the southeast of Fairbury and the southwest of Forrest.

The Wabash ran on the T., P. & W. tracks in Fairbury at the western edge of the town. A hotel and depot used to be located there, but since that time they have been torn down.

From Fairbury, the train continues on to Forrest, which is the Wabash terminal. This branch was an important branch to the local communities during the strike that took place during the 1940s.

The Wabash Railroad Ad

The Wabash trains on the Streator branch were somewhat popular. Ads were entered into the newspaper so as to promote passenger train business. Here is how one ad looked:

The Car Service of the Wabash Railway
is the very best, and consists of Handsome New
SMOKING and PARLOR COACHES, Elegant
FREE RECLINING CHAIRCABS, the best and
most completely equipped DINING CAR SERVICE
in the World, and the magnificent
PULLMAN PALACE, WAGNER and WOODRUFF
SLEEPING CARS.

The road bed is kept in splendid condition. The tracts are
all laid with heavy rails, and the fast time, close
connections and superior accommodations on the Wabash
are unequaled by any other line.[4]

THE FOUNDING OF FAIRBURY

Fairbury was founded by the T., P. & W. railroad in 1857. Fairbury was one of the smarter towns that knew enough to make the most of her railroad. The railroads became quite successful and important in shipping grain and feed to other places along the line. Other towns in Livingston County, such as McDowell, Avoca, and Reading, are considered ghost towns. They slipped away into nothing when better railroad businesses came to other parts of the country.

Octave Chanute and Caleb Patton

It is true that Fairbury was founded by a railroad, but it also true that she was founded through a quarrel about the railroad. The quarrel was between two businessmen, Caleb Patton and Octave Chanute. These two men are credited with the founding of Fairbury. Caleb Patton lived on the east end of Fairbury, on a farm. This part of the town site was swampy and muddy and loaded with grass. Octave Chanute was the Chief Construction Engineer of the Peoria and Oquawka Railroad, now known as the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad.

Patton had heard that the railroad was heading east, so he went looking for Chanute. When he met up with Chanute, he made a deal with him. This was the deal. Patton wanted the railroad to run through his property. If this was done, Patton was willing to give Chanute half of the town site. After hearing the proposition, Chanute agreed to it.

Patton gave half of the town site to Chanute as he said he would and then went to work to start dividing his own farm into lots. He gave four of the lots to his Baptist church. He set aside a piece of land, 200 x 870 feet, for the town's railroad depot buildings.

The rest of the lots were sold. The property was sold almost instantly, because the people of Avoca didn't want to be left out. So, with his work all completed, his part of the agreement was finished.

The Reaction Toward the T., P. & W.

Chanute and his workmen were anxious to lay some track through Fairbury, but the people of the town had quite a different viewpoint. The Peoria and Oquawka Railroad was poor and proceeded along with much difficulty. No stock was put into the railroad.

As a result of these conditions, the people of Fairbury were not interested in the railroad. They welcomed Chanute and his workmen in a very unfriendly matter. They did not want a railroad to be built through their town and if it became necessary, they would make much trouble for the workmen.

These people were determined to stop all railroad construction. They watched every move of the workmen. Some of the people even held shotguns, ready to take action if a single rail was laid.

Chanute's Plan

Chanute was determined to get his railroad through. He had to complete his part of the agreement. At that time in history, the state legislature made it possible that if railroad tracks were laid without any protest, the tracks were to be left down. Chanute decided to take advantage of the law.

One day, he and his workmen went to the east side of town and placed some of the railroad ties there. Then, they went back to the west side of town and started to work again. They worked, or at least tried to work, until night time. Then, in the dark of the

night, they crept to the east side of town and started to work there, heading west. They worked until daybreak. To the amazement of the townspeople, they saw a train running over the tracks.

The people were shocked to see that the railroad was completed, not to mention the surprise of the train. Now, the whole business was made legal, and Chanute's part of the agreement was finished. With that done, Chanute and his workmen worked their way to Effner, Indiana.

The Early Feuds Against the T. P. & W.

In those beginning days, Fairbury was known as a feuding town. If there was a fight to be fought, Fairbury was the place to go. After all, Fairbury was born out of a little quarrel herself. Many different kinds of feuds took place. There were feuds between the East end of town and the West end of town, feuds between men, feuds between little children, and many more not mentioned. There were feuds between the townspeople and the T., P. & W. railroad that are interesting. A couple of these are described below.

The Townspeople Against the T., P. & W.

Coal mines were beginning to open up in Fairbury, and they helped bring success to the community by attracting more railroad business. The people of Fairbury were very pleased with the business. Then, the railroad men became stubborn and wouldn't pay the people. When the people realized how hard it was to collect the payments, they sought legal advice. With this help, the people were allowed to seize things that the railroad owned and to raise the prices on all of their bills. Eventually, this action forced the railroad to go into debt. The railroad men were furious. So, with both sides angry with the other, they feuded with each other. They did little things to each other, hoping to get even. This wasn't accomplished until ten years later.

It had been a hot, dry fall that year and on that particular day, it was also windy. Outside of the town were the railroad men. They were in a freight train. Just on the outskirts of Fairbury, they revved up the engine. As they went flying through Fairbury, sparks flew from the freight and caught fire on the ground. The men kept going, but as they looked back at the town, they saw that the whole East side was burnt to a crisp.

The Townspeople Against the Passengers of the T. P. & W.

It was very noticeable that Fairbury had a reputation of being a rough town. She had a successful passenger train service. In the 1860's, Fairbury had twelve passenger trains going through, daily. As one of these trains were pulling into the station, a loud shout could be heard. It was the brakeman's voice warning all passengers to pull down their window shades. If the passengers failed to heed the warning, they may have gotten hit in the face with a delicious, fresh-baked pie.

T. P. & W. Passenger Service

As mentioned before, the T., P. & W. at one time had twelve passenger trains going through Fairbury. Many people relied on these trains to get to work or to deliver their mail. So, on April 16, 1926, when the passenger train service was stopped, many people were disappointed. At this time, only two passenger trains were in operation through Fairbury. One train headed east at 8:25 A.M. and the other train headed west at 7:59 P.M. The stopping of the passenger service was done without the permission of the state commerce commission.

The stopping of the passenger service would hurt the mail service. Before, the mail came and went with the passenger trains. Now, the people would have two new choices on when to send their mail. They would have to send the mail either on the 12:00 M. train or on the 2:10 P.M. train. If the mail wasn't sent at one of these times, it would have to be mailed the next day. Mail going to Chicago could not leave after 2:10 P.M. unless it left on the 4:40 P.M. Wabash train to Forrest. For this to take place, the Fairbury post office people would have to clear the idea with the Wabash railroad men, because at that time the Wabash trains didn't carry Chicago mail.

Not only was sending mail affected, but getting mail was also affected. Both the 8:25 A.M. and 7:59 P.M. trains carried a lot of mail and newspapers for the people. The mail coming into Fairbury would have to be cut down.

This removal of the trains also created problems for the passengers. If for some reason the people wanted to go someplace, how would they get there? The railroad service thought of this problem and allowed the people to ride on their freight trains.

The Sale of the T., P. & W. to McNear

June 11, 1926, was the day that many people were waiting for. This was the day that the T., P. & W. railroad was to be sold. People were curious to see who would buy the railroad.

It was a general opinion, though, that the Pennsylvania would buy the eastern half of the road and the Burlington would buy the western half of the road. There was a petition to postpone the sale, but Judge Louis Fitzhenry declined it. The sale would remain on June 11.

When June 11 finally arrived, many people were standing and waiting at the T., P. & W. terminal in Peoria. It was a public sale and it was held near the end of Persimmon Street. The sale lasted for two hours. The outcome came as a big surprise. The railroad was sold to George P. McNear, Jr., of New York City, for \$1,300,000. Edward P. Allen was the person in charge of the sale. So, when the sale was over, McNear handed Allen \$65,000 in checks. Everyone thought the sale was a success. McNear was to receive ownership of the railroad within either sixty or ninety days.

On June 16, 1926, the federal court met to discuss the sale of the railroad. Apparently, some bondholders of the railroad wanted some more time to check out the financial background of McNear. So, Judge Louis Fitzhenry postponed the decision until June 28. On this date, after everything was checked out, Judge Fitzhenry approved of the railroad sale to McNear.

At one time, "Mr. McNear told the court he would have the railroad rehabilitated in its entirety within six months after his purchase is confirmed." [5]

It seemed as if McNear meant business because he soon moved to Peoria to take care of his railroad. It was to be run separately from all other railroads. McNear, also, made a trip along the line on a little gasoline railroad car. He wanted to look over the railroad to see what he had to work with. While on his trip, he passed through Fairbury.

The Strikes of the T., P. & W.

The Strike of 1941-42

The start of a strike began on Monday, December 8, 1941. T., P. & W. trains were stopped from their schedules. The only movement on the tracks since Monday was on December 11. This movement was by a train, picking up freight all along the line.

Apparently, there was some problem between George McNear and his employees that belonged to a brotherhood. The strike was to happen on Tuesday morning at 11:00. In the meantime, the union members and the railway mediation board agreed to postpone the strike.

The brotherhoods involved were the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and the Brotherhood of the Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen. It is not known what happened but somehow on Monday, December 28, at 12:01 AM, the strike took place. As time progressed, it grew worse.

As some background information McNear was very powerful. When he had his mind set on something, nothing could change the way he felt. So it was with the strike. When World War II started in England and Europe in 1939, the railroads had to work extra-hard, long hours. They were busy sending war materials to help those countries. They worked overtime, but were not getting paid for it. They tried discussing the matter with McNear, but he wouldn't listen. This was one of the reasons that started the strike.

The brotherhoods claimed that McNear was not following rules of the union regulations.

This strike action is the result of a long series of negotiations between the Railroad and these brotherhoods over the subject of rules and working conditions. The brotherhoods have advised the Railroad that they would not consider any rate of pay, no matter how high, unless the Railroad would consent to place in effect rules and working conditions which the brotherhoods have

demanding and which, while claimed to be so-called standard rules in effect on other railroads, would greatly impair efficient operation and result in grossly wasteful practices.

On December 28, the trains were again taken off the railroads. Only local freight was being moved at that time. No work was shared between the different railroad lines. The T., P. & W. was the only railroad on strike in the nation.

The superintendent of the T., P. & W. railroad, H. H. Best, made it known that all the employees belonging to a brotherhood were to report to work on Tuesday at 9:00 A.M. If they did not show up for work, they would be released. Best was ready to hire engineers, conductors, firemen, and brakemen to take the places of those employees which don't show up. These men are called "scabs". Officials of the brotherhoods said picket lines had been made. There were three groups with eighteen men involved.

On Monday, January 19, 1942, an injunction was made against strike violence. The injunction was made at the federal court in Peoria. There had been some acts of violence along the line. Some of the strikers tried to blow up a bridge between El Paso and Eureka.

Hopefully, the injunction would help stop these acts. As a result of the injunction the embargo on the freight trains were partially lifted.

On Saturday, March 21, 1942, McNear began to blame government officials of being Partial toward the strikers. Approximately one hundred men have waited for union and government officials to let them go back to work. J. W. Barringer, the director of the office of defense transportation, said "They will return to work under working conditions which prevailed before December 29 when new rules which led to the strike went into effect."

President Roosevelt gave orders to J. W. Barringer to get the railroad turned over to the government. McNear had refused to listen to anything about the strike, which was eighty-four days old. The orders stated that the strike railroad was to be kept under government control until it "was no longer required for the successful prosecution of the war." [8] The railroad was placed in government hands on March 22, 1942. It was the first private property taken. Despite the government taking over the railroad, McNear was still president under the influence of government officials.

After the government took over, some progress was made for some of the employees. On July 1, 1942, the office of defense transportation increased the wages for ninety-two engine and train service employees. The office gave a 26 percent wage increase. It was figured it would cost the railroad \$3,200 each month.

Everything has gone well under the ownership of the government, since 1942. Now, on October 1, 1945, the railroad was to be returned to McNear. The order was given by President Truman. The Office of Defense Transportation, in Washington D.C., told the public of the road's return.

The Strike of 1945-47

The Strike, Itself

At 12:01 A.M. Monday, October 1, 1945, George P. McNear, Jr., planned to place another embargo on the railroad service. This was the exact time that he was to regain control of his railroad from the government. So, a second strike had begun.

Under government management, the employees were allowed to join a union. So, when it went back to private management, they wanted to continue under unions. The workmen that were striking did not care about the pay. They only wanted the same conditions as they had for three and a half years under federal control. McNear wouldn't allow it.

The strike was hurting many people. Since no trains were running, Willard Barclay, manager of Farmers Grain Co., said they could only store twenty-five thousand bushels of beans before they were in trouble. Eli Leman, of the Corn Belt Elevator, said that if the embargo lasted for any length of time, they would be in trouble. Mr. DeFries, of the Fairbury Coal Chute, had several cars to ship coal to other places, but the coal couldn't be transported because the T.P. & W. trains weren't working. The only trains on the T., P. & W. tracks were the Wabash trains.

On October 9, 1945, more than ninety shippers (coal dealers, elevator men, and lumber dealers) met in El Paso to talk about the strike situation. Also present at the meeting were the labor unions and George P. McNear, Jr. They were all willing to sit down, talk to each other, and try to find a solution to the problem. They learned that as each day passed, they lost some of their business. Not only were the shippers and business firms being hurt, but so were the railroad employees. At that time, there were over ten thousand farmers that depended upon the railroad for shipments.

Pretty soon, these farmers would be hauling in grain, wanting the railroad to ship it. So, the main purpose of the meeting was to get the railroad in operation as quickly as possible without further loss to everyone concerned. [9] If the situation was not taken care of immediately, the railroad and the employees of the railroad would lose a lot of money.

As of October 19, nothing new was reported of the strike, as it had been in progress for three weeks. Hoping to get things under control, something else was tried. McNear was to choose two people whom he wanted to represent him. The railroad brotherhood, likewise, were to choose two people whom they wanted to be represented by. These four representatives were to act together and choose a fifth person, making a total of five representatives. These five representatives were then supposed to discuss the strike problems. Their decision was to be final. As time went on, though, it turned out to be a hopeless case. It didn't bring about any solutions.

The First Movement of a T., P. & W. Train

The first news of any kind of movement by a T., P. & W. train, since the beginning of the strike, was on Tuesday, January 15, 1946. The movement wasn't very long, but it showed some progress. The train didn't even move a mile. It was three cars long, and it carried coal. The train moved from the East Peoria train yards to the Central Illinois Light Company plant.

There was a crowd of union pickets along the route. A police squad was standing by to observe the movement. The picketers were dissatisfied with the movement and threw some rocks at the train, but other than that, there was no real damage done.

The Gridley Riot

A terrible disaster happened on Wednesday, February 6, 1946. Two men were killed and three men were wounded in a riot at Gridley. It happened between three A.M. and 11:45 A.M. that day. It seemed that there were fifteen to twenty strikers driving in cars ahead of the train. There were four cars. They were driving along, throwing objects at the train. They broke some of the caboose's outside window lights. As they arrived at Gridley, they pulled their cars over to where the train would stop. They got out of their cars and stood, waiting along the side of the tracks, watching for the train to appear. As the train approached, the strikers noticed that there was an armored car just in front of the engine.

On this car were four guards, two on each side of the car. These guards were carrying guns. As the train got closer to its stopping point, one of the guards threw the switch on the track. He motioned to the engineer that it was clear to go ahead. When he looked again, he noticed that he threw the switch the wrong way, so he changed it to make it right. As the train pulled alongside of the strikers, they began to shout at each other. The strikers on the ground were calling the trainmen scabs, a worker who replaces a union worker during a strike, and the trainmen were shouting back at the strikers on the ground. Not much could be understood between the two groups because the weather was terrible. It was windy and snowing. All of a sudden a shot was fired. It came from one of the guards. Then more shots were heard. When it was all over, two men were dead and three men were wounded.

The First Train Through Fairbury

The first news of any kind of movement by a T., P. & W. train through Fairbury, since the beginning of the strike, was on Monday, June 3, 1946. The train was heading toward the east as it went through Fairbury around 1:00 that afternoon. It made a short stay of fifteen to twenty minutes before going on its way to Effner, Indiana. This is a description of the train:

The train consisted of a locomotive, headed by the steel sheathed gondola car which was in use when two strike pickets were shot and killed by railroad guards at Gridley

last February 6. The remainder of the train consisted of two loaded coal cars, several empty cars and two cabooses." The next day the train went through Fairbury again. This time it was heading west, because it was returning to Peoria. It picked up several cars that were sitting on the tracks. They were there since the strike began.

McNear's Death

Many times during the eighteen and one half months, somebody tried to get things settled. Each time it seemed as if nothing would work. Then, on the night of March 14, 1947, something happened. George P. McNear Jr. was murdered. He had been at a basketball game at the Bradley auditorium and was returning home that night. It was around 10:10 P.M. when he was shot. He was close to his home at 220 Moss Avenue, Peoria. He was taken to the St. Francis Hospital. He died at 11:05 P.M. that same night.

It was at the hospital the doctors discovered that he was shot six times. Five of the bullets were still lodged within him. There were three bullets in his neck and two bullets in his chest.

McNear was remembered as a man with great ability. He made a broken down, ruined railroad very successful. He was a tall man, quite powerful. He was athletic. He loved tennis and was an expert at it. Most of all, though, McNear was remembered as a man with his own ideas. No person nor anything could change his mind once it was made up.

The Settlement of the Strike

McNear's death is what ended the strike. A little over a month later, on April 17, the strike was officially ended. At this time the railroad brotherhoods and the two executors, appointed in McNear's will, made a truce. The two executors mentioned were (1) Guy A. Cladson, Chicago Attorney, and (2) J. A. Hunter, of Peoria, a member of the Hunter, Kavanaugh, Mc-Laughlin & Bond law firm.

The strike was an expensive one. It cost the railroad, the railroad brotherhoods, the shippers, and the people that depended on the railroad a total of many thousands of dollars. The unions probably wouldn't get back their lost wages nor the railroad its lost earnings.

The strikers went back to work at 12:01 Monday morning on April 21. Everything was getting back to normal. By the end of the strike, thirteen brotherhoods were involved. So, they and the railroad management spent eleven days talking over and compromising until they arrived with an agreement. The contract was signed on the 22nd. It was to be similar to the contracts on other railroads. This is what the contract provided:

It provided for rates of pay, rules and working conditions that prevailed on September 30, 1945, plus the national wage increase of 18-1/2 cents and changes

in working rules that followed presidential intervention in last spring's rail- road crises.[11]

The terms were to take effect on Monday, April 21, the day the workers went back to work.

Other agreements were made. It was agreed that the five hundred or more persons that were unemployed because of the federal control would be rehired, if they wanted to be. Any war veterans would be rehired too, if they were qualified under the selective service act. Changes were made in the work habits. (1) The railroad was given a six month trial basis to determine if they wanted either switch crews or yard crews or both, to be used to push trains up a slight slope, between Peoria and Washington. (2) At Effner, Indiana, the railroad crews could switch trains for an hour and not have to worry about paying for a penalty. Before, they had to pay to do this. (3) One man was supposed to act like a pilot on the switch engine between East Peoria and Washington. Before, a three man yard crew was used. (4) Railroad crews on trains coming into Peoria from the west were allowed to take their livestock directly to Bridge Junction, near the Stockyards. Before, they had to take them to East Peoria where yard crews took the livestock back to Bridge Junction. (5) Railroad crews were allowed to gain extra cars at the Minneapolis and St. Louis railway connection, on the west side of Peoria, and leave them in the city without having to pay any extra money.

The New T., P. & W. President

After George P. McNear, Jr. died, Russell Coulter became the new President of the railroad. The railroad had begun operating at all the towns along the line once again. It had been out of commission because of the strike from October 1, 1945 to April 21, 1947. Mr. Coulter makes the following statement:

Normal service has been resumed for on-line shippers, and we will be servicing Perishables and other such freight within a short time. Trains are moving and the outlook is good. Our first job is to get business back to normal and to handle that business efficiently and carefully.[12]

The Influence of the T., P & W. on Honeggers Co.

Honeggers Feed Mill was the most affected company during the strike. In August of 1945, Honeggers shipped out four loaded train cars every day. Besides shipping their feed products on train, they also used trucks to carry the feed to their customers. During the 1940's, W. W. Walker was the traffic manager of the company. He said that the company could be hurt as much as 35 percent. Just before the strike, Honeggers was at its peak with all the products they shipped out.

During the strike, Honeggers had to ship their feed products to their customers. Since the railroads weren't working, they depended heavily on their trucks. Their trucks were

rented. There were four, big, semi-trailer trucks to do their work. Honeggers would get the raw materials they needed from Forrest. They would manufacture the materials into feed, and then, they would truck the finished feed products back to Forrest. This was quite an expensive process, and they weren't keeping up with their normal productions. This went on for five and one half months when they decided to extend their operations.

Honeggers bought the Hanley Mills, located in Mansfield, Ohio. Their plans were to begin working there by March 18, 1946. The biggest part of the company was moved to Mansfield. This move brought concern to many people in Fairbury. Members of seventeen different families were unemployed. All of these changes were due to the railroad strike.

W. W. Walker, who had been the traffic manager at Honeggers for the past two years will manage the mill at Mansfield. The mill was supplied with huge diesel motors and had modern mixing machines. There was enough storage space for one hundred thousand bushels of grain. The company planned to keep the states to the east and south supplied with all the feed they needed. Meanwhile, back at the Fairbury mill, the company continued to supply the local communities and some of the other surrounding states.

Honeggers first started into a large production business when they bought the Fairbury elevator from S. V. Van Horne. This man sold the elevator to them on December 20, 1941. Soon after it was purchased, Honeggers started to remodel it. This was a description on how the place looked.

Modern machinery, including a large corn dryer, was installed and the two buildings connected by an underground conveyor for handling the grain....an additional side track was laid to handle the many cars of material they received and shipped out.[13]

The Suit Against the T., P. & W.

Around December 19, 1947, four companies from the Fairbury community filed a suit against the T., P. & W. for \$3,000,000. This was continued from the 1945-47 strike. The local companies involved were (1) Honeggers and Company, (2) the Corn Belt Elevator, represented by Eli Leman and E. J. Schiltz, (3) the Fairbury Coal Chute, represented by Henry and Margaret DeFries, and (4) the Farmers Grain Co. The charge against the railroad was that the railroad has failed to furnish transportation and that the box car service is inadequate for interstate commerce." [14] John E. Cassidy filed the complaint in the U. S. District Court.

To defend their right to charge for damages, the companies' complaint quotes a couple of court decisions. One of the decisions was dealing with the railroad and if it had failed to supply transportation when it went against its duties under the Inter-state Commerce Commission. The complaint quotes, "This court (district) held that the railroad had failed and ordered a receiver to furnish transportation." [15] The complaint quotes another,

"The appellate court found the shippers were entitled to have interstate rail transportation and granted relief by a mandatory injunction ordering the road to supply service.[16]

The railroad made no attempt to defend itself against these charges, so, the complaint says, "it has been adjudicated between the parties that on and after October 1, 1945, the railroad failed to furnish transportation." [17] Another point of the complaint states that the shippers are suffering losses because the railroads have not provided them with satisfactory boxcar service for shipments between states. The shippers demand a jury trial.

On January 29, 1948, Judge J. Leroy Adair released the complaint by Fairbury shippers. After two years of dispute about the case, the supreme court finally agreed to look over the mandatory injunction by the appellate court. Before anything was done with the complaint, McNear was shot and the railroad went back to work. When this happened, the railroad and railroad brotherhoods told the supreme court that the complaint was insignificant. With that, the court told Judge Adair to release the complaint.

The Switch from Steam Engines to Diesel Engines

Fairbury used to be a refueling center for trains. There were a water tower and coal chute on the east side of town. They were located on the west side of the Indian Creek, where the bridge crosses the creek today. It was in this place that trains, passing through, could stop for water and fuel. There was a well that supplied the water tower with water. The water would fall into the engine's tank while it was refueling. Fairbury got the coal she needed from her own coal mines. Later, when her mines were shut down, she got the coal she needed from Canton and other places along the line.

This little place was like an oasis in the desert. Trains that traveled long distances may not have needed to be refreshed, but for the local trains, it seemed like Heaven. The local trains did a lot of switching, stopping, and moving cars. This took a lot of energy from the train. So, they refueled, frequently. The trains came to depend on these kinds of refueling stations.

"The steam engine put the romance in railroading."[18] The steam engine was a powerful thing. It was nicknamed the "Iron Horse."[19] It was called this because it sounded exactly as if it were alive. It made a heavy breathing sound. This was caused by the steam going through the engine. Then, when the train started moving, it made a terrifying sound.

This was caused by the movement of the pistons. It took time for the steam engine to get moving, but when it did, it was a powerful "Iron Horse."

Then everything changed. The railroads switched to Diesel engines. On December 15, 1947, the T.P. & W. tried their new Diesel engine. It was pulling a freight train which consisted of forty cars, a special coach, and a caboose. The train made a trip from La Harpe to Effner, Indiana, and back in the middle of the afternoon. The total trip was

around four hundred miles. Officials were riding on the train. They were learning about the engine and seeing how well they liked it.

The Diesel engines were smooth running, but they just didn't seem to have as much power as the steam engine. As time passed, though, the engines began to improve. As the Diesel engine began to improve, the steam engine began to slowly fade away. With the fading away of the steam engines, the refueling sites were no longer needed, so, they were torn down.

Conclusion

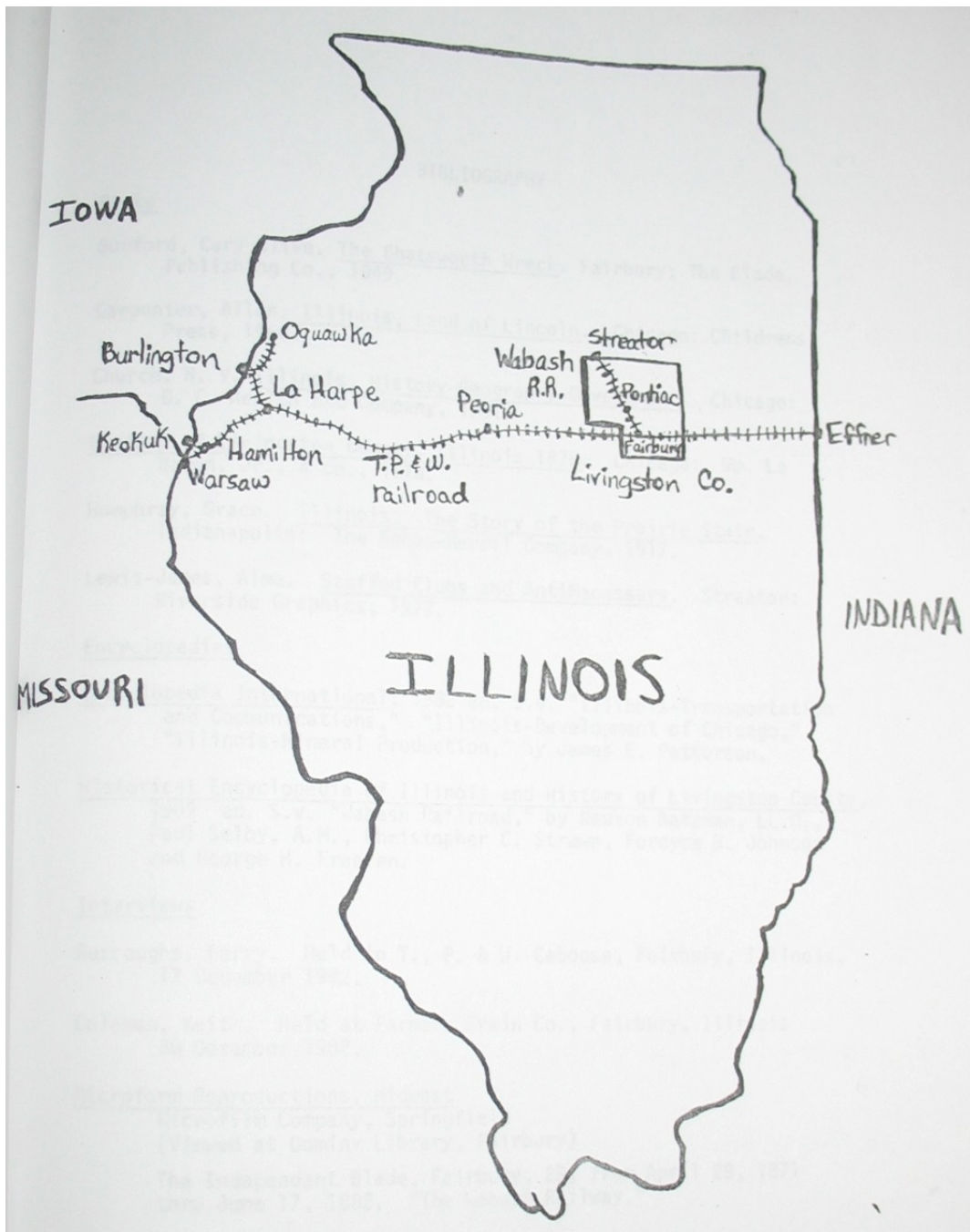
Railroads have been around almost as long as Illinois has been a state. They have changed the wilderness into a state full of resources. The railroads provided ways to bring the land closer to the people. They introduced the people to things they never dreamt of doing. The value of the railroads cannot be expressed.

At first, the railroads had trouble. Either there wasn't enough money or the people flatly rejected them. Later on, the people finally did realize the importance of the railroads.

Still later, the railroads faced trouble with unions. A union is a group of people who decide to get together for some common intention. The railroads and these unions couldn't agree with each other, so some of the railroad men went on strike. A strike could last any length of time. The T., P. & W. strike lasted for eighteen and one half months. During this time, many people suffered. As the strike ended, though, the town of Fairbury was ready to bounce back into action.

The people of Fairbury grew dependent upon her railroads. It allowed them to transport grain to their customers. The railroads were successful then, and still are today. Most of the grain is shipped in hopper cars, which have three compartments. A door at the bottom of each compartment pulls out and the grain slides down. The rail freight on these cars is less than the cost of trucking and the saving is passed on to farmers in the prices paid for grain. The number of hopper cars shipped by Farmers Grain Company were: 1980 - 450; 1981 - 540; 1982 - 600.[20] By Honeggers and Company the cars of grain and feed shipped were: 1980 - 757; 1981 - 781; 1982 - 765.

At the beginning of the 1830's, Illinois had a dream to become the center of all trade. At one time this dream came true. The railroads were a very big part of the building of the state. In fact, "without them we were, and, in all human probability, would have, remained a waiving prairie.[21]



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